



Newsletter of the Pendleton Bird Club

Kákya Táymut

KUK-yuh TIE-moot, Umatilla Indian Translation: *Bird News*

Volume 3, No. 11 Pendleton, Oregon November 2005

McNary Dam and Hat Rock State Park Field Trip — November 5, 2005

It was crisp weather when eleven Pendleton Bird Club members journeyed to the McNary Wildlife Area, McNary Dam, and Hat Rock State Park on Saturday morning, November 5th. The evening before had brought windy rains to the area, so the clear weather brightened our spirits for the birding we were about to do. Pendleton High School's football win the night before was a topic of conversation as June and Duane's grandson had played in the game.

Arriving at Wildlife Area, the group from Pendleton met Dave Herr, Nancy Brown, and Neal Hinds. We saw a variety of birds, some of them enjoying the seed that Dave had put out to attract them just for us: Song Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Black-capped Chickadee, and House Sparrow. The sparrows flitted constantly so for a new birder such as I, one sparrow is almost like another, but not with the expertise of long-time birders Aaron Skirvin, June and Duane Whitten, Neal Hinds, and Dave Herr. Betty Husted, Jerry Como and I were grateful to them for their willingness to help us see, hear and identify the birds. I hope someday we will be able to distinguish birds who differ only by a speck of color on the nose, a tail feather, the color of their stockings (my word for legs), and other very fine details.

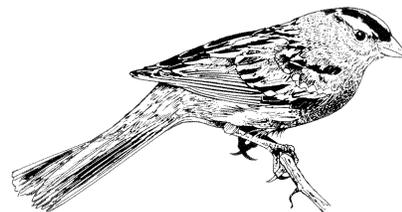
Walking the well-kept trail of the Wildlife Area, we saw Dark-eyed Juncos, American Goldfinches, House Finches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Cedar Waxwings, Northern Flickers, Spotted Towhees, and a Marsh Wren. A Virginia Rail was heard but not seen, which is usually the case. They are elusive when among the cattails and other vegetation

bordering the ponds and wetlands in the Wildlife Area. Are you familiar with the expression "thin as a rail?" It refers to the rail of which the Virginia Rail is a familial member. These birds are indeed thin (compressed from side to side) and able to quickly and agilely weave their way through the cattails, rushes and dense vegetation of the marsh.

An adult Great Blue Heron pleased us at the beginning and end of our walk by staying put the entire time in the stream that ran by the parking area. It must have had a busy night! As we walked around one pond, seven well-camouflaged Black-crowned Night-Herons rested or slept in the trees along the shore. Waterfowl were abundant with sightings of Wood Ducks, Mallards, and American Wigeons. A highlight of the bird walk was seeing seven male Buffleheads. They are distinctive for their white bodies and backs of their heads. The contrast of the dark and white coloring on the shining water was a sight to behold. Their takeoff was also thrilling to the eye. Of course, not one of us had a camera!

After spending hours at the Wildlife Area (birding is for patient people who are eagle

eyed) we went on to McNary Dam where we saw six kinds of gulls. A Herring Gull was perched on the same tower it had been on a week ago.



We saw its yellow eye in the scope. The Sibley's Bird Guide says it has an orange-yellow

orbital ring with a pale iris. We didn't see very many of this kind, but the numerous Bonaparte's Gulls were hanging out close to the dam doing a lot of diving for the fish parts in the river. These gulls are small and tern-like with slender, straight, black, pointed bills and rather narrow and straight wings. There were Ring-billed, California, and Glaucous-winged Gulls, too. The Glaucous-winged and Herring are pink legged gulls, stocky in their build and, like all other gulls, have color variations according to age. The sixth gull species was another pink-legged variety, the Western Gull, which is most often found on the coast. This particular Western Gull has a distinctive crooked, broken right leg. This is the third year Aaron and others have spotted it at McNary Dam. Although we sorted through the few hundred gulls flying around the spillway, we could not identify a Mew Gull in the flock. Just as we were about to leave the overlook just below the dam, a Peregrine Falcon made a brief appearance as it flew down river at high speed 10 to 25 feet above the water.

As we left McNary Dam, some in the group spotted a Common Loon near the boat launch on the upstream side of the dam. We had searched for loons, including Pacific Loons, on the river below the dam but found none. Other water birds we observed around the McNary area included Pied-billed Grebes on the ponds in the Wildlife Area, as well as Double-crested Cormorants and Common Mergansers that were diving for fish among the gulls below the dam.

The bird trip ended with a stop at the Hat Rock State Park. The store near the park sells corn so Aaron treated us to corn which we fed to the conglomeration of ducks and geese who were residing at the pond on this particular day. What a variety of birds with a lot of mixed breeding. A person is hard put to identify these hybrids. There was one Canada Goose who seemed perfectly content with this odd assortment of pond dwellers. A California Gull slowly waddled across the grassy slope above the pond and gave us great views of its field marks. A highlight at this pond was seeing a Horned Grebe who was diving for small fish along our shore. We were able to do an up-close study of its features as it caught several (perhaps as many as 30) minnows as we watched. As the grebe

swam by us, we were close enough to see its yellow-tipped bill. Surveying the wild ducks and American Coots on the pond, we spotted three Lesser Scaup as they dove for food on the far side of the pond. A Belted Kingfisher was our last sighting as we left the pond. What a satisfying way to spend a November Saturday morning!



Contributed by Sharon Vincent

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, December 8, 2005 7:30 p.m.

Sage Grouse Life History and Research in the Oregon Great Basin

**by
Jenny Barnett and Mike Gregg**

First Christian Church
Pendleton, Oregon
(Across from the Pendleton Arts Center)

Bird Club Field Trip

Sunday, December 18, 2005

Birding at McNary Wildlife Area

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Pendleton Safeway
parking lot (NE corner)
Trip Lead: Neal Hinds

Umatilla County
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Saturday, December 31, 2005

All are welcome to join the count!

See Article in this issue on how to join a team to count birds in the count circle near Pendleton.

Compiler: Aaron Skirvin 276-1948
askirvin@wtechlink.net

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, January 12, 2006 7:30 p.m.

**Club Members' Slides of Malheur
NWR and Steen's Mountain Trips**

First Christian Church Pendleton,
Oregon(Across from the Pendleton Arts Center)

Pendleton Bird Club Meeting

Thursday, February 9, 2006 7:30 p.m.

**Mike Denny Gives presentation On
Shorebirds**

First Christian Church

Pendleton, Oregon

(Across from the Pendleton Arts Center)

**Bird Club Field Trip to Oregon
Coast**

February 17 – 21, 2006

Birding the Oregon Coast

We will look for coastal birds from Lincoln
City to Yachats

To find out more, see the announcement in this
newsletter.

Contact: June Whitten 541-276-9019
jwhitten@oregontrial.net

Body Count

*Juniper Canyon — rabbit brush and cheat grass,
a pair of short-eared owls dipping toward earth;
one long-billed curlew, her mouth red flame,
calling a name we can't make out. From Butler
Grade bare ridges fan like fingers. Wind towers
trail along the rims, their long blades turning
toward whatever breathes.*

*Each tower kills two birds a year. A lot?
That's hard to say. How do we know
we've counted all the dead? Sometimes
they scatter carcasses—frozen to fool coyotes
and ravens—before dawn. Some searchers
find more than others. Burrowing owls
worry down the gully, claiming last year's badger
dens. Grasshopper sparrows buzz.
This morning's news: two more from Oregon.
("So many Jeremy's. Watch for the one
whose middle name is David . . .")*

*A dozen horned larks sing us back
to the Vansycle seep. Bullock's orioles, both males.
Kingbirds, east and west. A Bewick's wren.
We share our lunches, talk about the cost of power,
oil, the Blue Sky Plan.*

Submitted by Bette Husted



ANNOUNCEMENT OF PBC BIRDING TRIP TO THE OREGON COAST, FEBRUARY 2006.

The Pendleton Bird Club is planning a 5-day, 4-night birding trip to the Oregon coast in February 2006. This should be a fun trip to look for and observe coastal birds and sights that we're not accustomed to seeing in eastern Oregon.

WHEN: Extended weekend of February 17 through February 21, 2006. Leave Pendleton about 8 a.m. on Friday Feb. 17; return to Pendleton about 6 p.m. on Tuesday Feb. 21

WHERE: Central Coast of Oregon from Yachats to Lincoln City

BASE OF OPERATIONS: Waldport, Oregon (15 miles south of Newport)

TRANSPORTATION: Private cars (carpooling)

LODGING: There are a few options for lodging: (1) stay in a motel or Bed/Breakfast; (2) if you are fortunate enough to own, or know someone who owns, a beach home in the area, you could stay there; (3) camping (could be a little wet and cool) or motorhome, camper or travel trailer, since there are many campgrounds in the area; (4) stay in a vacation rental (many are available, provided you make reservations soon).

If you choose option 4, and intend to stay all 4 nights, and want June Whitten to make arrangements for reserving a vacation rental at Waldport, June must receive your lodging costs (\$100/person, see below) **by December 12**. June will attempt to reserve rentals that are located close to each other.

Private vacation rentals (homes), to be reserved by June Whitten: Each rental is fully furnished and will accommodate 4 – 6 persons. Cost of lodging will be about \$25 per person per night, including a non-refundable cleaning fee. Costs vary depending on the particular rental and the number of lodgers. Total cost (4 nights) must be paid well in advance in order to reserve your space. Make check payable to June Whitten (see contact info at the end of this notice). There is a refundable damage deposit for some rentals. Items furnished in the vacation rentals include: bed, sheets and blankets; kitchen facilities with all the usual appliances, cookware, dishes, table

service, and utensils; all typical furniture; 1 or 2 bathrooms; washer and dryer, laundry soap; towels; paper products; telephone (local calls, incoming calls, and toll-free calls only). NOTE: THE VACATION RENTALS RENT FOR A FLAT DAILY FEE, REGARDLESS OF HOW MANY PEOPLE ACTUALLY OCCUPY THE RENTAL. THE FEES MUST BE PAID IN ADVANCE. NORMALLY, THE OWNERS OF THE RENTALS WILL NOT REFUND THE TOTAL AMOUNT DUE TO CANCELLATIONS, AND AS THE RESERVATION DATE NEARS, NONE OF IT WILL BE REFUNDED. MOREOVER, THE COST OF THE RENTAL IS SHARED EQUALLY AMONG ALL THE LODGERS IN THE RENTAL, AND, IF AT THE LAST MINUTE ONE OR MORE PERSONS DON'T MAKE THE TRIP, THE DAILY COST OF THE RENTAL DOES NOT CHANGE. IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO OTHERS IN THE GROUP TO ASK THEM TO PICK UP THE ADDITIONAL COSTS OF THOSE WHO DO NOT MAKE THE TRIP. ONCE YOU COMMIT BY SENDING IN YOUR LODGING COSTS, IT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO RECEIVE A REFUND.

FOOD: Each participant will be responsible for the costs of his/her food. We will eat at restaurants for some meals and cook some meals. Each person will pack his/her own lunch each day. Several grocery stores are readily accessible in the area.

***** COSTS OF LODGING, FOOD, AND TRANSPORTATION WILL BE UP TO EACH INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT*****

BIRDING AREAS: We will have daily plans for birding and sight-seeing, including Alsea Bay (at Waldport); Yaquina Bay and south jetty (at Newport); Marine Science Center mudflats (Newport); Old-town Newport; Yaquina Head; Cape Perpetua; Yachats; Depoe Bay; Seal Rock; Siletz Bay; D River (Lincoln City). Trip leaders will provide advance planning and guidance to the birding sites.

To register for the trip, please send (via regular mail or email), **your name, address, phone number, and email address to:**

June Whitten
1837 SW Athens Ave.
Pendleton, OR 97801 Email:
jwhitten@oregontrail.net Phone: 541-276-9019

Mark Your Calendars

The December 8th Bird Club meeting will feature a raffle / auction to raise funds for the bird club. Raffle items include PBC caps and T-shirts, bags of bird seed, a Sibley Field Guide, a woodpecker doorknob, decks of playing cards plus additional items that will surely peek your interest. Come out to have a good time and enjoy the fun at our next meeting!! Support *your* PBC!!

Join us on the Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count

Here are the details for the 19th official Umatilla County Christmas Bird Count scheduled for **SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2005**. This local count is part of the national 105th annual Audubon Christmas Count. Christmas Bird Count history and lots of information can be viewed at the Audubon website (www.audubon.org then click on link to Christmas Bird Count).

At this time, no major changes have been made in where or how we conduct our count (the participant fee remains at \$5 per birder if they are older than 17 years of age and each participant will receive a CBC issue of *American Birds*). The Area Coordinators have already volunteered (or been volunteered) and other interested participants should contact them directly for count day coordination.

- ◆ **Area 1** (Pendleton, Wildhorse Creek and Riverside)
Jack Simons – (276-8566, home)
- ◆ **Area 2** (Umatilla River and Cayuse)
Jenny Barnett - (966-2389, work)
- ◆ **Area 3** (McKay Reservoir and Birch Creek)
June and Duane Whitten -(276-9019, home)
- ◆ **Area 4** (Patawa Creek, Coyote Creek and upper Tutuilla Creek)
Dolly Robison (567-3642, home; 278-6471, work)
- ◆ **Area 5** (Mission, Emigrant Hill and Poverty Flats)
Aaron Skirvin (276-1948, home)
- ◆ **Area 6** (Spring Hollow Creek and upper McKay Creek)
Dave Herr (276-6413, home 278-3869, work)

Bird enthusiasts can also choose to do stationary feeder counts if you have an active location. All Christmas Bird Count participants will get together

for a count-down at the end of the day and compile the count results. Last year, the 24 participants saw 78 species of birds. Abby's Pizza on Southgate in Pendleton has reserved the back room for us from 4:00 – 8:00 pm that evening. Please feel free to contact Aaron Skirvin (276-1948, home or askirvin@wtechlink.net) if you have any questions about the areas or feeder counts or how to participate.

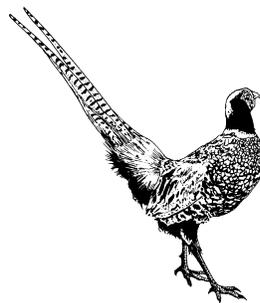
GO CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTING — SATURDAY, December 31, 2005

Contributed by Aaron Skirvin

October-November Bird Sightings

Although winter is not my favorite time of year, as the weather turns colder the action at bird feeds does start to pick up. The best bird I've found in my yard so far this fall is a **WESTERN SCRUB-JAY**. I first noticed it November 7, and still see it occasionally around my Mount Hebron neighborhood. This fall I've noticed far more **House Sparrows** at my feeders than previous years and far fewer **House Finches**. I am interested in knowing if anyone else has noticed a decrease in the number of House Finches.

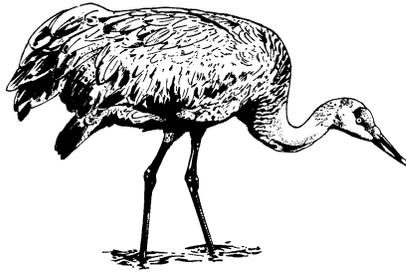
Others are also finding unusual birds in their yards this fall. On October 22, Rose Scott was able to photograph a **Pileated Woodpecker** perched in a cherry tree in her Mission yard. Mayanna Porter reported that she and her husband have at least 6 **Ring-necked Pheasants** and over 300 **California Quail** visiting their feeders at Pilot Rock. On October 23, Carl Scheeler had a great "yard bird". He reported a **Great Egret** at his pond along McKay Creek a couple miles south of Pendleton. During the



last week in October, Becky Brown had up to 3 **Steller's Jays** in her Hermiston yard. And on November 14, Sharon Simons reported a flock of 15 **Sandhill Cranes** circling her yard near Mission Ponds. On November 18, Bob Tapley photographed a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** in his yard. Bob also reports that he has been hearing a **Great Horned Owl** calling in the neighborhood. On the same day, Carole and Don Guenther reported the seasons first **BLUE JAY** at their feeder. It is always fun to hear what others are seeing in their yards, so please continue to send your "yard" sightings to me.

On October 20, Neal Hinds reported finding a **Peregrine Falcon** at Cold Springs Reservoir. While birding there, Neal reported over **300 Sandhill Cranes** circled the area and landed. This must have been quite a sight.

Birding at McNary and Cold Springs on the 23, June Whitten and Aaron Skirvin found 3 **Common Loons** at McNary and along with the expected waterfowl, 2



late **Barn Swallows** at Cold Springs. Checking out Mission Ponds on the 23rd, along with the expected waterfowl, Jack Simons found 5 **American White Pelicans**, 7 **Hooded Mergansers**, 1 **Tundra Swan**, 6 **Gadwall** and several **Ring-necked Ducks**.

Walking along the Pendleton Parkway, Hiroko Cannon found a **Bufflehead** and an **American Coot** near the Main Street Bridge. Birding below McNary Dam on October 27, Mike and MerryLynn Denny found a **Common Loon**, **Glaucous-winged Gull** and 4 **Steller's Jays**. These were the first **Steller's Jays** Mike had ever seen at the Wildlife Area. On October 28, Jack Simons saw his first **Bald Eagle** of the fall near his home along the Umatilla River. On the same day Craig Kvern found an **Osprey** at Indian Lake. Birding below McNary Dam on October 30, Aaron found a **WESTERN SCRUB JAY** in the day-use park. This was the first sighting of this species in the county for the year.

On November 2, Neal Hinds reported a **Great Egret** feeding in a pasture near Edwards road, south of Stanfield. On November 3, Craig Kvern found a **Long-eared Owl** in a hawthorn thicket about 4 miles west of Mission. This is a difficult species to find in the county. Connie Betts continues to bird around the Pendleton Community park. She still has not located any **Blue Jays** this fall, but on November 6, found 7 **Mallards** and a **Northern Flicker** near the park. The same day, Aaron, June and Duane Whitten birded in the southern part of the county. Their main objective was to check some Bluebird boxes, but along the way they managed to collect an impressive list of bird sightings. Of special interest were several **Rough-legged Hawks** (the first they had seen this season), one **Ferruginous Hawk**, a **Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk** and 2 **Prairie Falcons**. Undoubtedly the best bird of the trip was an **AMERICAN TREE SPARROW** they located near Pilot Rock. In addition to the birds, the group found a very inquisitive Long-tailed Weasel near a

Bluebird box they were preparing to move. The weasel stayed around for almost 10 minutes and Duane was able to take some excellent photographs.

A number of folks have reported seeing **American White Pelicans** in the area. Rose Scott reported 21 at Mission Ponds on November 6. November 7, Aaron found 20 **American White Pelicans** at the "ponds" along with 4 **Bonaparte's Gulls**, a **Great Egret** and 45 to 50 **Tundra Swans** flying over the area. On November 9, Jim Lavadour reported seeing a flock of 40 **American White Pelicans** flying over I-84 near Exit 216.

On November 12, Aaron, June and Duane conducted their first Pendleton-Cayuse-Pilot Rock Raptor Run of the season. They found a total of 76 birds of prey, which Aaron reports is lower than last year. He attributed the lower number of hawks to a lack of prey items, primarily voles.

On the morning of November 14, Paul Sullivan, leading a Portland Audubon Birding Weekend group, checked out the area around McNary Dam and Umatilla. Their finds included a **Merlin** in Umatilla, a **Great Egret** flyover below the dam as well as 16 **Black-crowned Night Herons** and 12 **Bonaparte's Gulls**. They also found several **RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS** below the dam, the first seen in the county this year.



On November 19, Judy Johnson and Priscilla Double found a flock of at least 10 **AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS**, while birding in the foothills near Thorn Hollow.

As I write this, 243 species have been seen in Umatilla County this year. Now that we are moving from fall into winter, the opportunity to find additional "new county year birds" will increase, so keep looking. Please continue to report your sighting (including birds seen in your yard) to me, Dave Herr, at 276-6413 or dsherr@oregontrail.net.

Newsletter Editor: Position Vacant

Editor for November : Jack Simons,

Phone: 276-8566

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